



DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

DIOCESAN SYNODAL PHASE



LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

INTRODUCTION

Every three years, Catholic bishops from around the world gather in Rome for a meeting called the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, at which they discuss a matter of pastoral importance proposed to them by the Pope. For the 2023 Synod of Bishops, our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has chosen the theme of “synodality” itself: that is, how the Church is journeying together, and prayerfully reflecting together on its journey, so as to discern God’s will, and to pursue the pathways to which God calls us—towards deeper communion, fuller participation, and greater openness to fulfilling our mission in the world.

In preparation for the 2023 Synod, our Holy Father has asked every diocese, guided by their bishop, to undertake their own synodal phase of listening, dialogue, and community discernment, in which every person can participate and contribute. Our bishop will prepare a report summarizing the proceedings of these sessions, which will be shared with Synod organizers. The purpose of these sessions is not to reexamine unchanging Church teaching on matters of faith and morals, but to discuss how the timeless Gospel is lived out in the concrete circumstances of our time. We warmly welcome you to this session, in which we come together as sisters and brothers. We invite you to participate prayerfully, with openness and charity, in this opportunity to reflect together.

MEDITATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Let us begin by listening attentively to what God says to us through his word, then meditate it in silence.

This is a reading from the Acts of the Apostles (2:1-4, 14-18)

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.... Then Peter...proclaimed... “This is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ‘It will come to pass in the last days, that I will pour out a portion of my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. Indeed, upon my servants and my handmaids I will pour out a portion of my spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy.’”

[Silent meditation time]

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray together:

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go, and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity, so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us! St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, pray for us!

St. Thomas More and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, patrons of the Diocese of Arlington, pray for us!

FOCUS QUESTIONS

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS *A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together,” by proclaiming, celebrating, and living the Gospel as we make our way to the Promised Land of Heaven.*

1. *What experiences of “journeying together” in your diocese and parish bring you joy and hope?*
2. *What difficulties and obstacles have you encountered to “journeying together” in your diocese and parish?*

THEMATIC QUESTIONS

3. *How do we most effectively witness to the truth, goodness, and beauty of the Gospel?*
4. *How effective are we in our three-fold mission of proclaiming and teaching the faith, of celebrating the liturgy and sacraments, and of service in charity?*
5. *How do all the members of the Church—laity and clergy—collaborate in their common mission?*
6. *How well do we dialogue—listen attentively and speak up candidly—within the Church and with the wider community?*

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Thank you for participating in this session with charity and with frankness. Let us together give thanks to God for this opportunity to come together to speak, to listen, and to discern for the good of the Church.

Let us pray: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, you make us one in you. Help us continue to love and to serve you, every member of your Church, and everyone we encounter, that we may all be united in proclaiming, in celebrating, and in living the truth, beauty, and goodness of the Gospel, the Good News entrusted to your Church. Amen.